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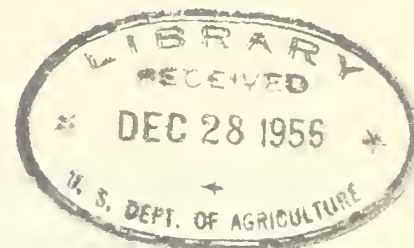
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RADIO TODAY

A report on significant changes in the
broadcasting industry and what they mean to Extension

by

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When television first appeared on the American scene, many within the radio industry lost heart and were about to consign radio to a very minor role in our communications system. For a time, this appeared to be true. Morale was low and constructive programming was almost at a standstill. Radio was on the defensive. Then the tide began to change. The expected last paralyzing blow from television never fell. Just as newspapers twenty-five years ago learned that co-existence with radio was possible, so radio was learning that it could live in the same community with TV. There were things that radio could do, that TV could not do. People wanted them both. Today, radio morale in the big communication centers is good -- even high. Listenership is greater in some areas than it was before television. Program service is improving. Furthermore, the Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., Washington, D. C., reports that:-- Despite the recent rapid gains in total revenue, the spectacular growth of the broadcasting industry is far from over. Radio, though no longer the big money-maker, still accounts for a substantial and steady volume. One of the striking facts in the broadcasting picture is the way radio has held its own. There are more stations operating today than ever before -- 3,041 as against 2,000 in 1949 when TV began to steam. They reach areas not now being tapped by local TV advertisers. Set sales are high. Manufacturers expect 12 to 14 million-unit years for some time to come. Radio time sales in 1955-- at \$545 million -- are down only 12 percent from the '52 peak. (Stations are specializing in local advertising, music, news, and sports -- leaving spectacular stuff to TV.) Radio's net profits are actually moving up again because its production costs are lower.

THE NEED

In the light of these developments and after consultation with the Radio and Television Service of the Office of Information, USDA, the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters, and the editors of Broadcasting Magazine here in Washington, it was agreed that it was timely and desirable for the Extension Service to re-examine its entire radio effort. High in our own consideration of such an examination was the need for modern guideposts in the field of radio to help us project our radio work into the future.

STATION COOPERATION

The first step was face-to-face contact with leaders in the radio industry in the various communication centers throughout the United States. Joe Tonkin was sent to contact these station managers, program directors, and farm directors: John F. Meagher, vice-president, National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters; Hollis Seevy, director, Clear Channel Broadcasting Service, Washington; Frank Beatty, senior editor, Broadcasting Magazine, Washington; Lowell Watts, Colorado A & M, Chairman, AAACE Radio Committee; Jules Herbuveaux, general manager, and Everett Mitchell, farm director, NBC, Chicago; Frank P. Schreiber, general manager, Norman Kraeft, farm director, and Bruce W. Dennis, program director and the educational director, WGN, Chicago; Bob McKinsey, program director, and Maynard Speece, farm director, WCCO, Minneapolis; Phil Hoffman, manager, KLZ, Denver; Jack Wagner, program director, and Henry Schacht, farm director, NBC, San Francisco; Larry Christopher, associate editor, Broadcasting Magazine, Hollywood; George Cranston, general manager, A. M. Woodford, program director, and W. A. Ruhmann, farm director, WBAP, Fort Worth; W. H. Summerville, general manager, and George Shannon, farm director, WWL, New Orleans; David Lindsey, production manager, Mal Hansen, farm director, and Arnold Peterson, WOW, Omaha; and Bill McDaniel, Jack Stapp, and John McDonald, WSM, Nashville.

In an effort to strike a balance between large station and small station operation, spot check questionnaires were mailed to managers of "daytimers" and other low-powered stations in Pennsylvania by extension radio-TV editor Elton Tait and in Kansas by Kansas State College Radio Director Ken Thomas.

OBJECTIVES

Briefly, the survey had three main objectives:

- (1) To discover what changes, if any, had taken place in radio;
- (2) To determine if changes were needed in our radio effort to meet those in industry; and
- (3) To show the radio industry that we wanted to draw closer to them from the standpoint of getting their suggestions and working with them.

MECHANICS

From the outset, it was evident that one of the major areas of change has been in the mechanics of reception.

Radio listening habits have been changed by the mobility and penetration power of radio itself. We can listen almost anywhere, anytime.

There are thirty-three million radios in automobiles and an untold number in trucks, farm pick-ups, and other commercial vehicles. Most homes have at least two or three receivers. Dairy barns and farm work sheds, too, have their "sets." The new transistor radio that fits into the pocket and other types of portables forecast almost universal radio service. Power steering (for minimum noise) and transistors are making tractor radios practical. More than one radio farm director knows that a segment of his morning farm audience listens to him in bed, awakened by clock radio to hear early weather reports, markets, and news pertinent to the day's business.

A WORD ABOUT THE AUDIENCE

An important fact to keep in mind in connection with this broad reception and availability is that the total audience for the most part is listening at random EXCEPT WHERE IT HAS A SPECIFIC INTEREST OR DESIRES SPECIAL INFORMATION.

PROGRAMS

The biggest change in radio has been in programming. This was more or less triggered by NBC's Monitor, or block style programming, which was undertaken by that network after a study was made for it by the Bureau of Applied Social Research of Columbia University. The report on this study pointed to the tremendous general radio audience, but emphasized that much of it was a random, low concentration type of listening. Block programming reaches this random audience with an almost continual flow of music, news, and special short features. It has increased "local" broadcasting.

Although other networks and some stations do not agree with the Monitor idea, it has "rubbed off" on the industry, especially among the smaller stations. The listener is getting less and less of the full package show in which a 14-minute program stands alone as a unit with little or no relation to what goes before or after it in the broadcast schedule. The trend seems to be to a continuous flow, or relationship of one feature to another. This does not mean that program units, or packages, are out and that radio is nothing but a disc jockey presentation, but the program unit, today, is more concise and usually shorter.

COMMON GROUND

It appears now that the short, information-packed Extension newscast is acceptable to both the old system of radio programming and the new "music and news" block system.

WHAT ABOUT INTERVIEWS?

The radio interview, along with the news item, has also been shortened. Program directors now recommend three to five minutes -- with "under five" as the rule of thumb.

STYLE

The style of radio delivery has not changed much. It is still intimate, personal, and friendly. However, to reach the random listener, there is a renewed demand from station operators and program directors for clarity of speech and more care in preparation. This is not a request for precision announcing -- just good understandable English.

There is an obvious question of how spot news style can apply to Extension radio. In simple form, it calls for reporting the essence of the Extension story only, with a minimum of development and comment in addition to the basic lead (how, where, what, etc.). The purpose is to notify the listener rather than to explain. This does not rule out "helpful hints," but long presentations of "how-to-do-it" are not being used. There is more emphasis on reporting results instead of detailed discussion of the practice, itself. The straight talk by specialists (aside from short two and three minute taped commentaries) is, as one RFD put it, "a thing of the past."

Extension radio reports edited in this way have several noticeable effects on the broadcast, itself. First, it reduces the length of the program. Five to eight minutes is usually sufficient, although actually the increased use of the short items results in coverage of a greater variety of subjects. At the same time, this news style creates an atmosphere of immediacy for the listener and tends for that short time to increase the level of his attention.

WHAT ABOUT TIME OF DAY FOR EXTENSION (FARM FAMILY, ETC.) BROADCASTS?

The most interesting development in this line was the idea expressed by four 50,000 watt stations of presenting a farm program at 6:00 p.m. One station was already airing a farm show at 5:30 p.m. and had found it successful during the winter months. Another station had received an offer from an advertising agency to buy time at 10 o'clock at night for a farm program.

IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NIGHTTIME AND DAYTIME LISTENING?

A survey conducted in twelve TELEVISION areas for twelve major radio stations by Alfred Politz Research, Inc., states that:

"There is a striking change between day and night in the pattern of radio listening. Whereas, during the day, most people listen to radio while they are doing other things -- after supper, most radio listeners concentrate solely on radio."

WHAT THE SMALLER STATIONS SAID

Ken Thomas, of Kansas State College, circularized the stations in his State. Here are some of the results:

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
1. Is there less emphasis on the "package" show?	18	1
2. Has your station changed to a form of programming which has a continuous flow, such as predominately music with news and other features interspersed?	16	3
3. Could you use a five-minute extension news style taped program?	14	4
4. Do you use the same feature more than once a day without re-editing?	6	13

And here are some quotable quotes from stations in Pennsylvania, as gathered by Elton Tait.

WDAD, Indiana, Pennsylvania

What important changes have you made in your program methods during the past few years?

Answer: "More emphasis on local origination programs. More music and news."

WRAK, Williamsport, Pennsylvania

Is there less emphasis on the package show - more on continuous presentation?

Answer: "Yes, in most instances. We retain some of the package shows, however."

Is there a tendency toward less "how-to-do" and more reporting of farm news?

Answer: "Definitely, yes." (WNAE, Warren, Pennsylvania, noted that their county agent program seemed "to be a bit more toward reporting than in years past.")

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT

Radio program patterns will differ. The farm business reporter, "the personality," the friendly voice, etc., will continue to be part of farm radio. Changes in mechanics, listening habits, programming methods, and editing style are taking place. These changes do not complicate Extension's use of radio. In many respects, they seem to simplify it. The full discussion of these changes with radio station management seems to be the first step in bringing our radio effort up-to-date at the Federal, State, and county level.

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